

## March 18, 2005- House Budget Not In Line With West Virginia's Values

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This week there were two different federal budget proposals considered by the U.S. House of Representatives. I voted for a budget that reflects the values of southern West Virginia, our kids, our families, education, seniors and our veterans.

The Republican leadership's budget that passed by a slim 218-214, on the other hand, made funding cuts to programs that are crucial to West Virginia, which is why I joined Republicans and Democrats alike in voting against the bill. The budget that I voted against cuts vital education programs, cuts money for our veterans' healthcare, cuts money for our police and fire departments, and even cuts money for community development and jobs. While it makes these cuts, it increases funding for foreign countries instead of spending our money here at home in West Virginia.

Frankly, I believe the budget which passed puts the future security and prosperity of our Nation at risk. By cutting \$4.3 billion from important educational programs we are reducing the educational opportunities that our future leaders need in West Virginia. This budget cuts \$91.3 million of West Virginia's promised \$182 million in the No Child Left Behind program. This would mean that 23,475 children in West Virginia will go without promised federal help in reading and math, and 14,120 will no longer be able to enroll in after-school programs that boost academic achievement and keep kids safe.

These young people need a good education to ensure that America remains strong. The budget cuts funding for TRIO's Upward Bound, education technology grants, Safe and Drug Free Schools, "Even Start" family literacy grants, comprehensive school reform funding, vocational education grants, and federal Perkins loans. I will say it again; we cannot have a first class Nation on a two bit education.

This budget also cuts programs that help us defend our homeland. Millions of dollars are cut from the COPS program, which has put 693 police officers on the street in West Virginia alone. It also cuts \$11.8 million of the Homeland Security grants for first responders. These grants have helped provide our volunteer fire departments, police departments and emergency responders with crucial training and equipment to help protect our communities.

This budget is also slashing promised healthcare for those who served in our Nation's Armed Forces. Our 201,701 West Virginia veterans, including the newest veterans from Iraq, are having their benefits cut and their co-payments increased. This is not the way to thank our veterans for their service to the country. They deserve better.

The cuts to southern West Virginia in this budget do not stop there. While the budget sends \$22.8 billion to foreign countries to help build their economies, it also cuts \$23.7 million for community and economic development in West Virginia. The Economic Development Administration, the Community Development Block Grant, and many other programs that have helped create jobs and help the business community of West Virginia all receive significant cuts in this budget.

The budget which passed proposes to eliminate West Virginia's Rural Business Enterprise Grants, the Rural Business Opportunity Grants, and the 7(1) Loan Program, which brought in nearly \$34 million to West Virginia businesses alone in 2004. The budget also calls for \$52 million in cuts to the Essential Air Service program, which would devastate our small community airports and stifle our businesses that rely on the air services. This budget does serious harm to future economic development opportunities.

This budget is a reverse-Robin Hood budget for our Nation. It takes from the needy and gives to the richest. The tax cuts that continue to hurt southern West Virginia, which have brought our yearly deficit to more than \$400 billion, have levied a "debt tax" on each West Virginia family to the tune of \$2,400. To help our country and our economy we must reverse the trend of taking from the needy and giving to the wealthy.

The bottom line is that we show our values by where we put our money and resources and I do not agree with the values represented in this budget. A vote for this budget would tell the people of West Virginia that I have more interest in foreign countries and the richest of the rich than I do for the working people of West Virginia, our Nation's veterans, our future, our safety and our economy.